

LAWA DISABILITY ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 15 September 2021

Meeting held via Teleconference

ATTENDANCE

PRESENT

1. Myrna Cabanban, Chairperson
2. Julia Mockeridge, Community
3. Kathleen Barajas, Community
4. Louis Herrera, Community
5. Amir Torabzadeh, Community
6. Grant Firestone, LAWA Admin Representative
7. Tung Nguyen, TSA
8. Suzana Ahmed, Airline Representative (TBITEC)
9. Lorena Mora, City Attorney

ABSENT

1. LAWA Engineering Representative
2. Paul Herrera, LAWA Ops Representative

EXCUSED

1. Brandy Welch, Community

Meeting Started at 1:02 p.m.

I. Roll Call

Ms. Cabanban requested a call roll. A quorum was present.

II. Introductions

There were no introductions.

III. Consent Calendar

Meeting Minutes approval for August 2021. Mr. Torabzadeh stated that revisions were necessary before the August 2021 minutes could be voted on for approval. He will provide these revisions to Ms. Barnes for inclusion in the minutes. The approval for the August 2021 DAAAC meeting minutes agenda item was postponed to the October DAAAC meeting.

IV. Chairperson Report

Ms. Cabanban reported on her experience volunteering for the LAX Guest Services and faith group customer experience exercise. The exercise tracked the participants'

vital signs, to record data such as stress levels and eye movement as they go through the check in and screening process prior to boarding a flight. Both domestic and foreign flight check in and screening processes were evaluated. She mentioned that the process was relatively smooth until it was time to go through the TSA screening checkpoint. Once there, the TSA Agents did flag her through to a shorter line, but she had to wait approximately 30 minutes for a female TSA Agent to perform her screening. Ms. Cabanban also stated that long TSA wait times for passengers using wheelchairs happen very frequently, as she has personally experienced, and can result in multiple ramifications for passengers with disabilities, including missing their flight. While she was waiting, the exercise team disconnected the devices measuring her vitals and stress levels, which she wished they had not done so that they would have accurately captured her frustration and reactions.

Ms. Barajas also spoke about her experience during the exercise, stating that the initial sensor set up process accommodated her needs. She wasn't given the opportunity to try and put her own sensors on, but that might have been a miscommunication between herself and one of the exercise team members. There was some difficulty with the sensors and pads staying on as she gathered her belongings to begin the check in process, but the exercise team was close by to assist. After she completed her check in with KLM, she did not know where to go for the TSA screening. She did not know to look for the all gates sign. Because of her speech impairment and having to wear a mask, people often do not understand her when she asks for assistance, so she types her question into her phone for others to read. She tried to get assistance from another employee but ended up returning to the KLM check in counter for assistance. The airline representative instructed her where to go. Ms. Barajas mentioned that because of her disability and difficulty with speech, going through the TSA screening checkpoint is often dreadful. Sometimes it is easy, but there have been times where the TSA agents have given her trouble. Some agents find it impossible that she travels on her own and have to assist her with screening her bags, or run them too early so that they are sitting there for anyone to take and she has not yet passed through the checkpoint. Ms. Barajas said that during the exercise, her TSA screening experience went very well. The initial agent only took her purse for screening and did not take her carry on. She only waited a few minutes for a female TSA agent to arrive and perform her screening. After that, she experienced some confusion in knowing which elevator button to push to arrive at her gate. A LAWA Maintenance employee stopped to help her choose the correct floor. The length of the pathway (Passenger Tunnel) was a lot longer than she expected, but she was able to navigate the elevator at the end and locate her gate quickly. Ms. Barajas also noted that people who don't travel often may have difficulty with wayfinding until they get to the TSA checkpoint (in TBIT). After that, they would remember to read the signs. She also mentioned that some passengers may be overwhelmed by various environmental factors. Ms. Barajas also briefly discussed her experience in taking the FlyAway shuttle to Union Station, mentioning that the driver had some issues figuring out how to use the wheelchair lift, as it took him 25 minutes to figure out the process. He also did not properly secure her wheelchair, using one restraint instead of three.

Ms. Goldkorn mentioned similar experiences and frustrations with TSA screening checkpoints at airports, including long wait times, having items removed from her wheelchair, to being asked to remove her shoes or other articles of clothing, and experiencing judgement for traveling alone. She also stated that she was frustrated with having to experience this over and over with TSA, as well as difficulties with the FlyAway shuttle drivers.

Mr. Ray discussed an experience he recently had while traveling with friends, one of whom was deaf or hard of hearing and unable to read lips as he normally would because of the mask mandates. He tried to use the resources he did have to navigate the situation. Mr. Ray stated he asked if they would be willing to temporarily lower their masks so that they could read the agent's lips and understand the instructions. Some agents refused. Eventually they were switched to an agent who was willing to help. They still had difficulty understanding the instructions and noted that they didn't have to take off their shoes for the screening process, which they normally do. Mr. Ray suggested that the TSA consider buying clear masks for use when a deaf or hard of hearing passenger goes through the screening checkpoint, as it will help facilitate communications for those who rely on lip reading as a secondary mode of communication.

V. Public Comments

No public comments were submitted.

VI. LAMP Project Report

Mr. Ellars stated that the team continues to monitor compliance and have taken a lot of steps to ensure that accessible routes and temporary detours are being maintained through the Central Terminal Area and the areas under construction.

Ms. Goldkorn inquired about issues with path of access/egress to the FlyAway busses or other shuttle services that might prevent a person with disabilities from safely accessing the service.

Mr. Ellars stated that not every project falls under the purveyance of the APM Project, but he will note access issues and try to bring it up to the appropriate parties responsible. The FlyAway shuttle or accessibility at the shuttle stops are not under the scope of the APM Project.

VII. LAWA Operations Report

Mr. Herrera was not present at the meeting.

VIII. TSA Report

Mr. Nguyen stated that he would seek assistance from his customer service management team and from TSA Headquarters to see if they could be present at the next meeting and address some of the issues brought forth during the Chairperson's report and public comments. He also provided the link to the TSA webpage for passenger support and assistance: <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/passenger-support>.

Ms. Barnes stated that she would gather questions ahead of next month's meeting so that the TSA could prepare their presentation.

Ms. Cabanban asked if TSA provided targeted training on how to work with passengers with disabilities instead of focusing solely on policies and procedures.

Mr. Nguyen stated that there are other programs, such as the Passenger Support Specialist, which are trained TSA personnel at each one of the checkpoints that can provide further assistance to anyone who needs it.

IX. CBP Report

Mr. Hicks reported that passenger numbers are still at about 37% of their pre-pandemic totals. Because of the COVID-19 variants, international travel dropped during the last part of the summer when normally numbers would increase. To decrease exposure risks, CBP does not allow outside parties to enter the FIS to the maximum extent possible, only passengers, employees, and relevant service providers. He also discussed how CBP partnered with TSA, APD, and LAWA to observe the 20th anniversary of September 11, 2001.

X. City Attorney Report

Ms. Mora introduced herself and stated that she looked forward to working with the committee.

XI. ADA Report

Ms. Surmenian stated that she met with the City Attorney's Office and the LAWA Chief Financial Officer regarding the TBIT West Gates (formerly named the Midfield Satellite Concourse) to review the formal observations report submitted by Chairperson Cabanban on behalf of DAAAC to the City Attorney's Office, BOAC, and LAWA CEO. She also stated that everyone is aware of the report, and they are working on ways to address the issues, not only for the TBIT West Gates (MSC), but also moving forward in all new construction at LAWA. This is to ensure that the proper steps are taken to ensure that oversight doesn't occur in term of accessibility and moral compliance, as these are not just legal/regulatory issues, but also moral issues as well. She continues to work with the LAWA Commercial Development Group, City Attorney's Office and others to provide internal and administrative support. Ms. Surmenian also reported that Ms. Barajas' experience with the FlyAway shuttle was conveyed to the LAWA ground transportation team, and they are looking into the issues. At the end of August, a request for proposals for a new operator for the FlyAway shuttle service. The intent is to incorporate these concerns, expectations, and demands in the new operator's contract to ensure that there won't be any issues moving forward.

Ms. Mockeridge thanked Ms. Surmenian for listening to the concerns outlined in the report and for moving the report forward to be addressed.

Ms. Goldkorn asked if there would be any kind of written communication or response provided to the DAAAC committee from the receiving parties about what is

happening and when it will occur? She also asked if any kind of acknowledgement or updates will come back to the committee about the report and the actions taken, and if so, what can be expected.

Ms. Surmenian replied that she would follow up on any communications back to the committee and if timelines could be assigned to specific goals. She also stated that one of the goals was to have an access specialist embedded within the Commercial Development Group. Previously, it had been a contractor, but it is necessary to go beyond that. This includes making changes to the LAWA construction design standards to include specific language that will ensure full accessibility, beyond the minimums outlined in laws and codes. The current standards will be revised to make sure the greatest accessibility is demanded from anyone doing work for LAWA.

Ms. Goldkorn also asked if the access specialist Ms. Surmenian mentioned was CASp, if Ms. Mora would be submitting information and communications from the City Attorney's Office to the committee since she is the new CAO representative. Ms. Goldkorn also mentioned that there are many members of DAAAC, both committee members and members of the general public, who have a lot of background experience with accessibility standard, codes, and laws, and could be a great resource to LAWA as they review the construction design standards and other documents to help identify issues, missing items, and language that may not be strong enough or clear enough.

Ms. Mora responded that as it is her first week with the City Attorney's Office, she is still bringing herself up to speed on DAAAC and the TBIT West Gates (MSC) observations report. She will confer with the city attorneys who originally received the report, review the report itself and the current design standards.

Mr. Straniere stated that the City Attorneys are working with the Department of Disability Executive Director and himself, as the ADA Compliance Officer. They will be calling for a forum to discuss the findings revealed in the report and the strategy for resolving the deficiencies identified.

Note, the 2021 LAWA Design & Construction Handbook can be found here: <https://www.lawa.org/lawa-businesses/lawa-documents-and-guidelines/lawa-design-and-construction-handbook>

XII. New Business

Mr. Ray requested that the committee revisit and ask for an update on the assisted listening system (the induction loop) for all the airport terminals at LAX. It was last discussed several years ago. Currently, Vancouver International Airport (Canada) has the complete system set up to provide access for people who rely on the induction loop to assist with hearing. Therefore, he'd like the committee to revisit the issue with LAWA. Mr. Ray also inquired about increasing the internet speeds in all the airport terminals to allow for video communication. He stated that right now it is difficult for individuals who are deaf, deaf/blind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability to use accessibility equipment at the airport because the internet is so slow.

Mr. Herrera also emphasized the issue with wi-fi at LAX. He was concerned with how frequently the signal drops, which directly affects the accessibility technology he and many others utilize to help navigate around the airport.

Ms. Ahmed from TBITEC responded and stated that the issue has been brought to LAWA's attention on behalf of the airlines. They are looking into it collectively.

Ms. Cabanban stated that the induction loop was adopted within the city department, and the Commission on Disabilities recommended that all future contracts within the city include the induction loop technology. She also stated that this was something LAWA and the DAAAC committee should look into with the upcoming 2028 Special Olympics and other major events that will bring thousands of passengers through LAX. She reiterated the importance of LAWA being able to accommodate every single passenger that travels through LAX, regardless of disability or necessary accommodation.

XIII. Adjournment

Chairperson Cabanban called to adjourn, with no objections the meeting adjourned at 2:18 pm.

Minutes were presented to the Disability Access and Accommodation Advisory Committee (DAAAC) for approval at its regularly scheduled meeting on 20 October 2021. The minutes of the 15 September 2021 meeting were approved/not approved by DAAAC.

Secretary

Date